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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[Doc. No. AMS-FV-11-0089]

**Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) Inviting Applications for the Specialty Crop
Block Grant Program-Farm Bill (SCBGP-FB)**

Agency: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

Action: Notice

SUMMARY: The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announces the availability of approximately \$55 million in grant funds, less USDA administrative costs, for fiscal year (FY) 2012, to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. SCBGP-FB funds are authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill). State departments of agriculture are encouraged to develop their grant applications promptly. State departments of agriculture interested in obtaining grant program funds are invited to submit applications to USDA. State departments of agriculture, meaning agencies, commissions, or departments of a State government responsible for agriculture within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are eligible to apply.

DATES: Applications must be received between [insert date Notice is published in the Federal Register] and not later than July 11, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Trista Etzig, Phone: (202) 690-4942, e-mail: trista.etzig@ams.usda.gov or your State department of agriculture listed on the SCBGP and SCBGP-FB Web site at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: SCBGP-FB is authorized under Section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) and amended under Section 10109 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Public Law 110-246 (the Farm Bill). SCBGP-FB is currently implemented under 7 CFR Part 1291 (published March 27, 2009; 74 FR 13313).

The SCBGP-FB assists State departments of agriculture in solely enhancing the competitiveness of U.S. specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture, nursery crops (including floriculture).

AMS encourages states to develop projects solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry: increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops; improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”, and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors; investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; enhancing food safety; developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops; pest and disease control; and development of organic and sustainable production practices.

States may wish to consider submitting grants that increase the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers, including Native American and disadvantaged farmers. Increasing competitiveness may include developing local and regional food systems, and improving food access in underserved communities.

Projects that support biobased products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities (development of biobased products) should see the USDA energy website at: <http://www.energymatrix.usda.gov/> for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to the energy programs supported by USDA. Also, agricultural cooperatives, producer networks, producer associations, local governments, nonprofit corporations, public health corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers' market authorities and Tribal governments that are interested in submitting projects that support farmers' markets that do not solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops should visit the Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) website at: www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to FMPP.

Each interested State department of agriculture must submit an application for SCBGP-FB grant funds anytime between [insert date Notice is published in the Federal Register] and on or before July 11, 2012, through www.grants.gov. AMS will work with each State department of agriculture and provide assistance as necessary.

Other organizations interested in participating in this program should contact their local State department of agriculture. State departments of agriculture specifically named under the authorizing legislation should assume the lead role in SCBGP-FB projects, and

use cooperative or contractual linkages with other agencies, universities, institutions, and producer, industry or community-based organizations as appropriate.

Additional details about the SCBGP-FB application process for all applicants are available at the SCBGP-FB Web site: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/>.

To be eligible for a grant, each State department of agriculture's application shall be clear and succinct and include the following documentation satisfactory to AMS:

(A) One SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance". The grant period must start on or before September 30, 2012 and end no later than September 29, 2015.

(B) SF-424A "Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs" showing the budget for each project.

(C) One SF-424B "Assurances - Non-Construction Program"

(D) Completed applications must also include one State plan to show how grant funds will be utilized to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The State plan shall include the following:

(1) Cover page and granting processes. Include the point of contact and lead agency for administering the plan. Include the steps taken to conduct outreach to specialty crop stakeholders to receive and consider public comment to identify state funding priorities needs, including any focus on multi-state projects in enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops. Provide the identified funding priority areas.

Describe the methods used to identify socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and reach out to these groups about the SCBGP-FB. Identify by project title if an award was made to either a socially disadvantaged farmer or a beginning farmer. If steps were not

taken to conduct outreach to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers, provide a justification for why not. Provide a description of the affirmative steps taken to conduct a competitive grant process. Describe the methods used to solicit proposals that met identified specialty crop funding priority needs. Include the number of grant proposals that were received. Describe how members on the review panel were selected to ensure they were free from conflicts of interest and consisted of a community of experts in various fields, who were qualified and able to perform impartial reviews. Identify what fields the review panel members were from. State if the review results of the peer review panel were given to the grant applicants ensuring the confidentiality of the review panel members. If a competitive grant process was not used, provide a justification why not.

(2) State Department of Agriculture Oversight. Describe how and when the State department of agriculture will oversee subgrantee activities to ensure proper and efficient administration of grant funds. Include timelines for oversight activities. If grant funds will be used for direct administration of the grant agreement, include a budget breakdown to include percent of full-time equivalents (FTE), percent fringe benefits, supplies, etc. Also, include the administrative “project” on the SF-424A “Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs” including indirect costs.

(3) Project title, partner organization name, abstract. Include the title of the project, the name of the organization that will partner with the State department of agriculture to lead and execute the project, and an abstract of 200 or fewer words for each project.

(4) Project purpose. For each project, clearly state the purpose of the project. Describe the specific issue, problem, interest, or need to be addressed. Explain

why the project is important and timely and identify the objectives of the project. If the project has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops, describe the methods or processes the applicant will use to ensure all grant funds will solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops as defined in 7 C.F.R. § 1291.2(n). If a project builds on a previous SCBGP or SCBGP-FB project, indicate how the projects differ from one another. For each project, indicate if the project will be or has been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program. If the project was submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program, describe how the project differs from and supplements efforts of the SCBGP-FB and the other Federal or State grant program and does not duplicate funding efforts. The SCBGP-FB will not fund duplicative projects.

(5) Potential impact. This section shall show how the project potentially impacts the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. Identify who the specialty crop beneficiaries of the project are, the number of specialty crop beneficiaries impacted, how the specialty crop beneficiaries are impacted by the project, and/or the potential economic impact if such data are available and relevant to the project.

(6) Expected Measurable Outcomes. For each project, describe at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome-oriented objective that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose. The measurable outcome-oriented objective must define an event or condition that is external to the project and that is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries and/or the public. The measurable outcomes, when possible, should include a goal, performance measure, benchmark, and

target. Outcome measures may be long term and may exceed the grant period. For each project, describe how performance toward meeting outcomes will be monitored by identifying the data sources that will be used to monitor performance and how the data will be collected.

(7) Work Plan. For each project, explain briefly the activities that will be performed to accomplish the objectives of the project. Be clear about who will do the work and when each activity will be accomplished to include beginning and end dates for each project. Include the performance monitoring/data collection plan and how outcomes will be measured or completed inside the grant period.

(8) Budget Narrative. Provide in sufficient detail information about the budget categories listed on SF-424A for each project to demonstrate that grant funds are being expended on eligible grant activities that meet the purpose of the program and that costs are reasonable and allowable.

(a) Personnel - For each project participant, indicate their title, percent FTE, and corresponding salary for the FTE. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded personnel.

(b) Fringe benefits - Provide the rate of fringe benefits for each project participant's salary described in the personnel section. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded fringe benefits.

(c) Travel - Provide the following information in the narrative if applicable: destination; purpose of trip; number of trips; number of people traveling; number of days traveling; estimated airfare costs; estimated ground

transportation costs; estimated lodging and meals costs; and estimated mileage rate and costs for the travel. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded travel.

(d) Equipment - Provide an itemized list of equipment purchases or rentals, along with a brief narrative on the intended use of each equipment item, and the cost for all the equipment purchases or rentals. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded equipment.

(e) Supplies - Provide an itemized list and estimate the dollar amount for each item. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded supplies.

(f) Contractual - Provide a short description of the services each contract covers. Indicate if the cost is a flat rate fee or hourly rate. Indicate the flat rate fee or hourly rate to be applied. If hourly rates exceed the salary of a GS-14 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to www.opm.gov and click on Salaries and Wages), please provide a justification. List general categories of items the contract covers such as professional services, travel, lodging, indirect costs, etc. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded contractual.

(g) Other - Provide a detailed description of all other direct costs such as mailings, postage, express mail, faxes, and telephone long distance charges; speaker/trainer fees to include the amount of the speaker's fees and a description of the services they are providing; publication costs to include the estimated cost of printing of brochures and other program materials or scientific or technical journals as well as an estimate of the number of pieces to be printed/published; data collection to include the estimated costs of collecting

performance data to measure the project outcome measures; and the costs of holding a conference or meeting. If meals are budgeted for a conference or meeting for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification for why these costs should not be considered entertainment costs. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded other.

(h) Indirect Costs - Indicate percent of indirect costs. Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded indirect charges. Indirect costs for this grant period should not exceed 10 percent of any proposed budget. (i) Program Income - Indicate the nature or source of program income (i.e., registration fees).

(i) Estimate the amount of program income. Describe how the income will be used to further enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

(9) Project Partner Oversight. Describe who or what organization will oversee the project activities and how will oversight be performed to ensure proper and efficient administration for each project.

(10) Project Commitment. Describe briefly what specialty crop stakeholders outside the lead organization support this project and how all grant project stakeholders work toward the goals and outcomes of the project.

(11) Multi-state Projects. If the project is a multi-state project, identify the other states that are participating, describe how the states are going to collaborate effectively with related projects with one state assuming the coordinating role. Indicate the percent of the budget covered by each state.

Each State department of agriculture that submits an application that is reviewed and approved by AMS is to receive a base grant of \$181,109.88 to solely enhance the

competitiveness of specialty crops. In addition, AMS will allocate the remainder of the grant funds based on the proportion of the value of specialty crop production in the state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production using the latest available (2010 National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash receipt data for the 50 States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, 2007 Census of Agriculture cash receipts for Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and 2002 Census of Agriculture cash receipts for American Samoa) specialty crop production data in all states whose applications are accepted.

The amount of the base grant plus value of production available to each State department of agriculture shall be:

(1)	Alabama	\$400,934.95
(2)	Alaska	\$194,889.46
(3)	American Samoa	\$215,529.21
(4)	Arizona	\$1,263,013.24
(5)	Arkansas	\$255,175.60
(6)	California	\$18,671,947.22
(7)	Colorado	\$680,621.81
(8)	Connecticut	\$403,982.43
(9)	Delaware	\$244,484.20
(10)	District of Columbia	\$181,109.88
(11)	Florida	\$4,475,725.74
(12)	Georgia	\$1,130,698.80
(13)	Guam	\$182,946.05
(14)	Hawaii	\$378,686.07
(15)	Idaho	\$928,736.45
(16)	Illinois	\$632,932.59
(17)	Indiana	\$398,023.16
(18)	Iowa	\$271,120.00
(19)	Kansas	\$258,362.52
(20)	Kentucky	\$260,991.65
(21)	Louisiana	\$350,782.43
(22)	Maine	\$402,360.32
(23)	Maryland	\$393,434.24
(24)	Massachusetts	\$438,930.75
(25)	Michigan	\$1,337,219.16
(26)	Minnesota	\$703,253.61

(27)	Mississippi	\$281,843.82
(28)	Missouri	\$350,592.48
(29)	Montana	\$328,477.01
(30)	Nebraska	\$331,838.05
(31)	Nevada	\$259,473.57
(32)	New Hampshire	\$238,459.35
(33)	New Jersey	\$814,882.47
(34)	New Mexico	\$514,648.73
(35)	New York	\$1,114,085.81
(36)	North Carolina	\$1,151,269.80
(37)	North Dakota	\$614,984.68
(38)	Northern Mariana Islands	\$182,504.34
(39)	Ohio	\$642,019.98
(40)	Oklahoma	\$384,159.91
(41)	Oregon	\$1,487,908.90
(42)	Pennsylvania	\$1,027,509.84
(43)	Puerto Rico	\$381,396.61
(44)	Rhode Island	\$217,256.69
(45)	South Carolina	\$552,450.81
(46)	South Dakota	\$207,600.20
(47)	Tennessee	\$527,123.55
(48)	Texas	\$1,850,776.76
(49)	U.S. Virgin Islands	\$182,263.14
(50)	Utah	\$289,055.09
(51)	Vermont	\$223,751.88
(52)	Virginia	\$495,018.42
(53)	Washington	\$3,320,842.83
(54)	West Virginia	\$217,160.21
(55)	Wisconsin	\$882,214.81
(56)	Wyoming	\$205,501.72

Funds not obligated will be allocated pro rata to the remaining States which applied during the specified grant application period to be solely expended on projects previously approved in their State plan. AMS will notify the States as to the procedures for applying for the reallocated funds.

AMS requires applicants to submit SCBGP-FB applications electronically through the central Federal grants web site, www.grants.gov instead of mailing hard copy documents. Original signatures are not needed on the SF-424 and SF-424B when

applying through www.grants.gov and applicants are not required to submit any paper documents to AMS. Applicants are strongly urged to familiarize themselves with the Federal grants web site and begin the application process well before the application deadline. For information on how to apply electronically, please consult http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp. AMS will send an email confirmation when applications are received by the AMS office.

SCBGP-FB is listed in the “Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance” under number 10.170 and subject agencies must adhere to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars discrimination in all federally assisted programs.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621 note.

Dated: January 31, 2012

Robert C. Keeney
Acting Administrator
Agricultural Marketing Service

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